

For Parents and Teachers

Message to Parents

As a parent, you are the number one influence on your child's career path. Research consistently shows that high school students and graduates rank their parents ahead of teachers and counselors as important career planning resources. One of the most important things parents can do to help students with career planning is listen: be open to ideas, try to help your student find information, and not be judgmental. The earlier teens start thinking about what kind of career they would enjoy, the better off they'll be. Just because they change aspirations every six months does not mean they aren't dedicated. They are trying on different possibilities to find the right fit. Take each one seriously.

What support and advice can parents provide for their children?

- ★ Allow your child to make independent decisions appropriate for his/her age group and maturity level.
- ★ Career decision-making begins with career awareness, then exploration, and finally preparation. Help your child to develop decision-making skills at an early age. Allow your child to experience both the positive and the negative (but not dangerous) outcomes of the decisions.
- ★ Direct your child to the many different opportunities available. Encourage your child to observe people working, to read about different occupations, and to interview others about their work. Help arrange job shadow opportunities in occupations in which he/she is interested. Introduce your child to people who have the careers/jobs that are of interest. Suggest that



they contact people in their personal and professionals networks for information on summer jobs.

- ★ Visit your child's school counselor (with the child) to assist in getting help and answers to your questions. Ask what career development activities are utilized at each level, such as interest inventories, aptitude tests, etc. School counselors can provide guidance with education plans, career plans, and post-secondary plans.
- ★ Encourage your child to visit the career center. If you hear, "You only go there when you are a senior," then it's time to reassure them that career services are not just for seniors, and meeting with a career counselor can take place anytime.
- ★ Help your child keep post-secondary and occupational doors open by fostering and modeling positive attitudes towards learning. Support and encourage your child to:
 - Assess interests and aptitudes (natural talents or abilities);
 - Explore a variety of activities to develop all types of skills. Do not underestimate your child's learning potential;
 - Gain basic transferable skills, such as: reading, writing, mathematics, listening, speaking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, reasoning, responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, and self-management.
- ★ Investigate and visit various post-secondary schools with your child. Completing some of the basic requirements at a lower-cost school may enable you to stretch the education dollars.
- ★ Choose a variety of options for discussion. Include the major areas of interest, the amount

of further education that will be needed, and the different schools one may attend.

- ★ Encourage your child to develop alternate plans. Students need to recognize they are capable of doing more than one type of work. Provide living examples by pointing out persons you know who have successfully changed career directions in their lives.
- ★ Develop people skills by modeling positive ways of dealing with problems or working with people.

The ways you manage your work, life, and relationships will influence how your child responds in similar situations. Encourage participation in student organizations to learn and practice many different relationship skills that will help contribute to success.

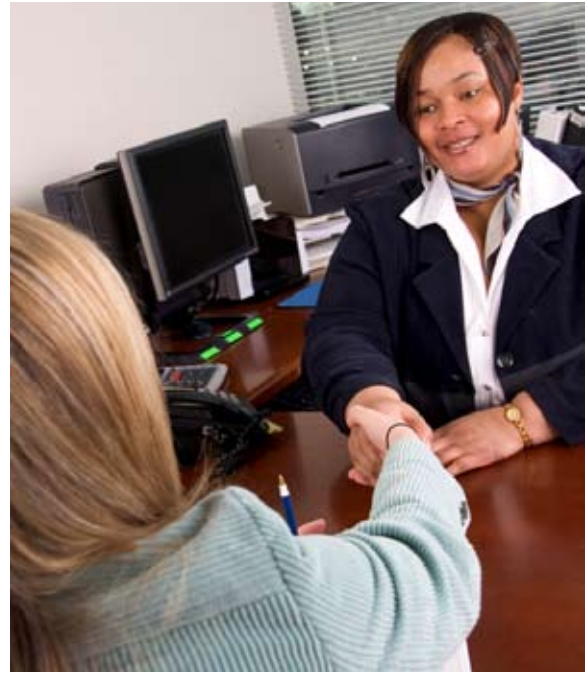
- ★ Help your child realize there are many routes and crossroads as he or she progresses towards the career goal. The possibilities include any combination of:
 - Apprenticeship
 - On the job training
 - Technical schools
 - Area vocational-technical schools
 - Military training
 - Two-year colleges
 - Four-year colleges and universities
 - Graduate and professional schools.

One thing you need is information—information about your child’s career planning needs and about career opportunities. A state or regional career guide can be a good place to start.

When families and schools work together on career development, children choose careers based on interests and abilities. They can avoid decisions based on stereotypes such as “jobs for women” and “jobs for men.” School counselors and teachers can describe career and education opportunities.

Counselors can introduce parents to programs offered by the school, such as career days and computerized systems for exploring careers. They can also identify books to help adults and young people make the right decisions.

Families and schools can work together as a team to help children appreciate and value their own talents and abilities. The challenge is to help your child direct his/her energies and talents toward career goals.



Some Tips for Teachers

Introduction to Career Planning

Teachers play a vital role in opening the eyes of students to how they can thrive beyond the classroom. Students get tired of hearing you talk about the opportunities—bring the dream to them. Guest speakers can testify to the range of possibilities in their own town and around the world.

Summer internships for teachers can give you real-world experience that will fire kids up about what happens in the world.

For students to be able to successfully choose among career options, they must evaluate their interests, abilities, and education. Developing a career plan is often a lifetime project. Students must continually evaluate the options available to them and be able to adjust and adapt to the ever-changing conditions in the workplace.

Here are some proven methods used to enhance occupational awareness, broaden students’ conceptions of career selections, and instill the importance of acquiring marketable skills.

- ★ Have students discuss their goals and expectations.

- ★ Have students ask themselves: “What would I want to do when I go to work?” Remind them that they should begin to examine their options early.
- ★ Discuss with students how their goals and priorities can affect their careers.
- ★ Help students explore their occupational interests and goals. Assist them in completing an occupational interest inventory.
- ★ Discuss with students the importance of a positive and professional attitude for success in the workforce.
- ★ Help students develop their expectations and aspirations into promising career choices.

- ★ Have guest speakers come to the classroom and discuss their occupations with the students. Enlist help from friends, neighbors, and family to find people in different occupations.



Career Development and Exploration

- ★ Help students identify, locate, and use the abundant resources available to further their career exploration. Encourage them to explore newspaper employment ads, the Internet, libraries, job placement agencies, regional agencies, and materials from their vocational guidance counselor.
- ★ Have students visit businesses or agencies to see what an actual work environment is like and to interview people working in various occupations.
- ★ Specialized career area activities for both teachers and students:
 - *Advanced manufacturing*—check out summer math programs at www.ams.org/

employment/mathcamps.html; and for science buffs, try Science Service (www.sciserv.org) for a list of science fairs, scholarships, and a magazine. The National Association of Manufacturer’s (www.gettech.org) has a career page for students. Another great resource for hands-on science lesson plans is www.teachervision.com. For helping students use teamwork to problem solve, go to the Odyssey of the Mind website (www.odysseyofthemind.com).

- *Construction*—students could be challenged to work within a budget to build a home. Teachers can receive a free copy of the CD-ROM *Building Homes of Our Own* at www.homesofourown.org. Teachers can apply for grants to fund special projects for students at www.actuarialfoundation.org/grant.

- *Energy*—occupational information can be found on many websites. Good places to download information booklets on different sources of energy are: the National Energy Education Development (NEED) Program website www.need.org; the Energy Information Administration website www.eia.gov/kids; and the National Science Teachers Association website www.nsta.org.

- *Science, technology, engineering, and math*—interested students could be challenged by participating in programs such as the West Point Bridge Design Contest. Teams design a virtual bridge and test its design capabilities. Free software is available on line at bridgecontest.usma.edu. Students ages 13 through grade 12 are eligible to compete for prizes. Another possibility for teachers to bring science into the classroom is the “World in Motion” program, which was developed by the Society of Automotive Engineers. Each module usually takes eight weeks and can be incorporated in the science curriculum. Modules are available at www.awim.org.
- *Health care*—students may enjoy exploring how the role of hand washing influences the spread of disease. At the start of class, have

one student dip his or her hands into Glo Germ, a powder that represents pathogens and glows under the ultraviolet light (DMA International, Moab, Utah, www.glogerm.com). Then give students an activity that involves sharing of equipment, and examine each student's hands under an ultraviolet light. For each student, record the areas of the hands that lit up under the light. Follow-up with a discussion on how cleaning equipment and hands between uses could have slowed the spread of the powder. A detailed lesson plan is available on the National Library of Medicine's "Changing the Face of Medicine" site (www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/).

- ★ Have students interview a person who is working in the occupation they are interested in entering. Each student could then write a paper and give a presentation in class on what they learned from the interview.
- ★ Use role-playing to improve interviewing skills and techniques and increase occupational awareness. Schedule presentations on selected occupations.
- ★ Once the students have chosen the schools or training in which they are interested, have them write a letter requesting information and applications.
- ★ Concentrate on topics such as:
 - key skills and aptitudes for various occupations;
 - salaries and compensation packages;
 - opportunities for advancement and lateral mobility; and
 - education preparation, technical training, and professional requirements.

Obtaining and Keeping a Job

- ★ Guide students in practicing basic office skills and proper business etiquette, and in learning employers' expectations and employees' rights.

- ★ Use "Help Wanted" ads and job listings from public sources. Help students determine what additional information should be collected to successfully pursue a position.
- ★ Construct résumés and discuss methods to highlight strengths and downplay shortcomings. Have students select positions from the "Help Wanted" ads or job listings and write a résumé and cover letter to apply for them.
- ★ Students should be able to communicate effectively within a business environment. They should anticipate questions they may have to answer during an interview and work on appropriate responses.
- ★ Have students complete an application for employment.
- ★ Have students come to school dressed in appropriate attire on a designated "interview day."
- ★ Students should write sample follow-up and thank-you letters and be reminded to send one after an interview.
- ★ Assign students various education/training levels, have them choose careers within those levels. Have them discover where they would find work, the types of work, and the following:
 - Skills/education/training requirements;
 - How to find employment—job search, résumé writing, reading classified ads, and filling out applications, interviews;
 - What type of pay they would receive;
 - Work environment;
 - How to calculate what their net pay would be; and
 - How to budget their pay.

Once the students have gathered all of the information, then have them discuss their findings as a group.